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ABSTRACT

Recent state-level curriculum frameworks have emphasized geography and history as core subjects of the social studies sequence of courses, from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. This Digest presents a rationale for the connection between geography and history, presents ideas for developing this connection within the curriculum, and highlights exemplary instructional materials. It is contended that key concepts of geography, such as location, place, and region are tied inseparably to major ideas of history, such as time, period, and events. Geography and history in tandem enable learners to understand how events and places have affected each other across time, and how people have influenced and have been influenced by their environments in different periods of the past. Curriculum developers and teachers interested in connecting geography with history in the curriculum might begin with the five geographic themes: location, place, relationships within places, movement, and region. The Agency for Instructional Technology (AIT) has produced 10 video programs, "Geography in U.S. History," that connect the five geographic themes to key events in U.S. history. These 10 programs as well as other teaching tools are described in the Digest. A list of 17 references is included. (DB)

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Geography in History: A Necessary Connection in the School Curriculum

by John J. Patrick

Geography and history are prominent subjects of the current curriculum reform agenda. Both subjects have been emphasized in high-profile curriculum reform reports produced by various organizations, such as the Bradley Commission on History in Schools, the Education for Democracy Project of the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools. The Bradley Commission, for example, recognizes "the relationship between geography and history as a matrix of time and place, and as context for events" (1988, 9). And, according to the report of the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, "Because they offer the perspectives of time and place, history and geography should provide the matrix or framework for social studies" (1989, 3). Furthermore, projects were launched in 1992 to develop national standards for teaching and learning geography and history in elementary and secondary schools. Finally, geography and history are highlighted as core subjects of the school curriculum in Goal Three of a set of six National Education Goals proclaimed in February 1990 by the President and state governors (Executive Office of the President 1990).

Geography and History in New Curriculum Frameworks. New state-level curriculum frameworks have emphasized geography and history as core subjects of the social studies sequence of courses, from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. In 1990, for example, the Florida Commission on Social Studies Education published *Connections, Challenges, Choices*, which presents the objectives, subjects, topics, and rationale for the state of Florida's new social studies curriculum for grades K-12. This Florida curriculum document emphasizes this central theme: "We recommend the adoption of a K-12 social studies program of study that . . . emphasizes history and geography" (1990, 3).

The Florida Commission on Social Studies Education went along with a trend initiated by *The History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* in placing the synthesizing and integrating subjects of history and geography at the center of the social studies curriculum of elementary and secondary schools. The California curriculum document was the leader in proclaiming the necessary connection of history and geography at the core of the curriculum: "History and geography are the two great integrative studies of the field [of social studies]. . . . Throughout this curriculum, the importance of the variables of time and place, when and where, history and geography, is stressed repeatedly" (1988, 4).

In 1992, two more state-level departments of education, Alabama and Mississippi, produced social studies curriculum frameworks based on the interrelated subjects of geography and history, with emphasis also given to the subjects of civics/government and economics. The Alabama and Mississippi curriculum frameworks, like the California and Florida documents, stress the utility and logic of teaching and learning geography through courses in American history and world history.

Geography as an Indispensable Part of Historical Study. The eminent geographer Donald Meinig views geography and history as complementary and necessarily connected in teaching and learning about the past and present. He effectively demonstrates the use of geographical ideas in the study of history in his remarkable work of scholarship: *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of American History*. In the preface to this three-volume project, Meinig stresses that, "geography is not just a physical stage for the historical drama, not just a set of facts about areas of the earth. It is a special way of looking at the world. Geography, like history, is an age-old and essential strategy for thinking about large and complex matters" (1987, xv). Teachers should examine Meinig's work to develop a geographic perspective on major events and themes in history.

Key concepts of geography, such as location, place, and region, are tied inseparably to major ideas of history, such as time, period, and events. Geography and history in tandem enable learners to understand how events and places have affected each other across time, how people have influenced and have been influenced by their environments in different periods of the past. Geographic learning is, therefore, essential to sound teaching and learning of history in general and American history in particular.

The necessity of connecting geography to history in the school curriculum is discussed in the recently issued *Framework for the 1994 NAEP U.S. History Assessment*. The authors point out that, "History has a spatial dimension—the places where human actions occur. For example, aspects of the natural environment, such as climate and terrain, influence human behavior; and people affect the places they inhabit. Therefore, main ideas of geography, such as the location of places and relationships within places should be included as important parts of the study of history" (1992, 10).

How to Include Geography in the Teaching and Learning of History. How should curriculum developers and teachers proceed to connect geography with history in the curriculum? They might begin with five geographic themes, presented in *Guidelines for Geographic Education:* location, place, relationships within places, movement, and regions. The National Council for Geographic Education, the Association of American Geographers, and the National Geographic Society have endorsed these five themes as foundations for geography education in schools. Increasingly, they are being adopted by developers of curriculum guides for state-level departments of education and local school districts. For example, these five themes are emphasized in the influential *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools*. How can these five geographic themes be used to illuminate and enhance important topics in standard American history courses?

Each of the five major themes of geography education is stated and described below in connection with key questions about a major event in world history: the voyages of Columbus, undertaken from 1492-1504.

- *Location:* People and places are positioned variously on the Earth's surface. Where in the world are places located? What are the locations of places in Europe and the Caribbean region that were linked by the Columbian voyages? How did the relative location of these places affect the events of the Columbian voyages?
- *Place:* Physical and human characteristics distinguish one place from other places. What makes a place special? How have the distinguishing characteristics of a place, such as Cuba, Santo Domingo, or Spain, changed because of cataclysmic events of the Columbian voyages?

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- *Relationships within Places:* The interactions of humans with their environments shape the characteristics of both people and the environment. How do people change the natural environment and how does the environment influence the activities of people? How did human-environment interactions affect the physical and human characteristics of the Western hemisphere region during and after the Columbian voyages?
- *Movement:* Human interactions on the Earth—people, products, and information—affect the characteristics of places. What are the global patterns of movement of people, products, microbes, domestic animals, seeds, and information that developed as a consequence of the Columbian voyages?
- *Regions:* The earth can be divided into regions to help us understand similarities and differences of people and places. How did the Caribbean region form and change during and after the Columbian voyages? How did the regions of Western Europe and Western Africa change because of the Columbian voyages?

The geographic themes discussed above are indispensable aids to understanding major events in U.S. history. For example, the themes of location and place can be fruitfully applied to analysis of President Jefferson's decision to purchase Louisiana and President Theodore Roosevelt's desire to build a canal across the isthmus of Panama. Teachers of American history can use the ideas of relationships within places (human-environment interactions) and region to enhance their students' learning about problems of the "Dust Bowl" of the Great Plains in the 1930s and New Deal programs designed to resolve such problems. Further, the geographic themes of region, movement, and place can yield insights for students about the "great migration" of Black Americans from the rural South to the urban North during the first half of the twentieth century.

Exemplary Instructional Materials that Use the Five Geographic Themes in Lessons on American History. The Agency for Instructional Technology (AIT) has produced 10 video programs, *Geography in U.S. History,* that connect the five geographic themes to key events in United States history. These 20-minute programs, designed for use in secondary school history courses, include the following topics:

- North versus South in the Founding of the United States, 1787-1796.
- Jefferson Decides to Purchase Louisiana, 1801-1815.
- Civil War and Social Change in Georgia: The Case of Savannah, 1860-1870.
- Clash of Cultures on the Great Plains: The Case of Red Cloud and the Lakota People, 1865-1890.
- An Industrial Revolution in Pittsburgh, 1865-1900.
- Americans Build the Panama Canal, 1901-1914.
- A Nation of Immigrants: The Chinese-American Experience, 1850-1990.
- Moving North to Chicago: The Great Migration of Black Americans from the Rural South to the Urban North, 1900-1945.
- A New Deal for the Dust Bowl, 1931-1945.
- The Origin and Development of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1945-1991.

Information about these ten programs, can be obtained from the Agency for Instructional Technology, Box A, Bloomington, Indiana 47402; telephone: (812) 339-2203.

The National Geographic Society has produced multi-media instructional materials that connect major themes of geography to the study of American history. This product is titled *GTV: A Geographic Perspective on American History.* Computers and laser discs present a visual journey through American history, with a special focus on geography. Each segment treats a different topic. Software allows rearrangement of maps and pictures to create individualized presentations. This interactive video program includes three types of information: (1) surveys of themes in American history, (2) primary documents, and (3) population data for particular periods of American history. This product is distributed for the National Geographic Society by Optical Data Corporation, 30 Technology Drive, Warren, New Jersey 07059.

Another exemplary teaching tool, published by the National Geographic Society, is *Historical Atlas of the United States.* This splendid oversized volume presents American history from a geographic perspective. The chronological treatment begins in 1400 and ends in 1988. Information about this historical atlas can be obtained from the National Geographic Society, 1600 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

References and ERIC Resources

The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2842; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1440 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from UMI or ISI reprint services.

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